



U.S. Department of Justice

**Craig S. Morford
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

*Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277
Fax: (313) 226-3561*

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758
Dawn Clenney (313) 237-4206

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**TWO MEN INDICTED ON CHARGES OF VIOLATING THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF MEMBERS
OF ISLAMIC CENTER OF AMERICA**

Detroit, Michigan - The Justice Department today announced that a federal grand jury has indicted two New York men for allegedly threatening members of the Islamic Center of America in Detroit, Michigan.

According to the indictments, which were unsealed today, Michael Bratisax, age 45 and John Barnett, age 54, both sent threatening e-mails on different occasions from their home computers in New York State to the Islamic Center of America with the intent to threaten Muslims in the free exercise of their religion. The government alleges that the e-mails threatened to kill Muslims in response to events in the Middle East. In order to prevail, the government must show that the e-mails constituted a "true threat" such that a reasonable recipient would take them seriously.

United States Attorney Craig S. Morford stated that "Threats against a person based upon that person's free exercise of their religious beliefs undermine the foundation upon which our country is built. He added that this prosecution shows our dedication to the enforcement of the federal criminal civil rights laws and federal criminal laws that enhance such enforcement."

Daniel D. Roberts, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Detroit, Michigan advised "Civil rights investigations remain one of the FBI's top priority matters and we do not treat threats lightly, particularly in light of our current threat level and activities taking place throughout the world. The specific threats directed against Iman Hassan Qazwini in this instance were particularly egregious. We are grateful for the assistance of the victims in this matter."

An indictment is an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is being jointly prosecuted by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The Justice Department has investigated over 600 incidents of alleged bias-motivated crimes against individuals perceived to be of Middle Eastern origin since September 11, 2001. Federal charges have been brought in 22 cases against 27 defendants, yielding the conviction of 18 defendants to date. With the help of the Justice Department in a number of cases, state and local authorities have brought nearly 150 criminal prosecutions.

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